

Star Wars

Wizard's RPG Stories

source : <http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=starwars/newsarchive>
upload : 10.IV.2006

Conversations With Lanius

By Morrie Mullins

Former Living Force Plot Director and Campaign Designer

While it doesn't happen quite so often as we might like, we were recently invited back to the Almas academy to speak with Jedi Master Lanius Qel-Bertuk. This was, unlike other occasions, to be a fairly free-form interview. A great deal has gone on in Cularin since the last time we had a chance to speak with Master Lanius in an informal capacity.

While the informality remained, it soon became clear that Master Lanius is not quite so detached from the problems in Cularin as we might have been led to believe. He is, as always, a man of deep conviction who believes that in the end, it will take more than words to heal all that is wrong in Cularin.

Hello, Master Lanius. Thank you for having us.

My pleasure. I trust your journey was comfortable?

Very. I must admit, we were somewhat surprised that you accepted our invitation, with the criticism that has been leveled against the Jedi in Cularin recently.

Criticism? There's always criticism. We do too much, we do too little, we support the wrong people, we don't support anyone at all. Was there a particular bit of criticism you had in mind?

We were fairly surprised to see the clips of Yara Grugara criticizing the Cularin Jedi. They played over and over for quite some time, and we're certain you saw them.

At the memorial service? It was poorly timed, and ill-advised. Ms. Grugara has since apologized. There's more than enough discontent in the system without fostering more for the sake of ratings, and I believe she knows this.

So the Jedi accept her apology?

There's nothing to apologize for. Perhaps she made a mistake, but no one is expected to be perfect. If it is important that someone publicly say so, then yes, I will at least accept her apology. But I won't deign to speak for the remainder of the Order. I doubt that anyone harbors anger over her words, though; many said things they did not mean, then. It was a difficult time.

I'm glad to hear you say that, since Yara very much wanted to be here.

Yara?

[A door slides open and Yara enters, wearing robes that appear to be patterned after traditional Jedi robes, but done in shades of violet. She approaches Lanius and shakes his hand, not seeming to notice his tired, tolerant half-smile.]

YG: Master Lanius - that's quite a mouthful, can I call you Lan?

LQB: If I said "No," would it stop you?

YG: Probably not. Look, it's wonderful to see you again. I'm so glad that you've accepted my apology on behalf of the Jedi. I really don't know what I was thinking at the time.

LQB: I can only speak for myself, Ms. Grugara. For me, no apology is necessary. And for me, I also don't know what you were thinking. For a time, I had begun to wonder if someone had replaced you with a clone, or a particularly unctuous droid.

YG: No, that was all Yara.

LQB: Does Yara always speak of herself in the third person?

Is that a question for me?

LQB: Either of you. It's an odd speech pattern. It makes me wonder what, exactly, she has seen or done that makes her feel as though she's unworthy to speak of herself as something other than an external entity - a thing. I recently gave an interview about attachment and its perils, but now I find myself wondering about the perils of detachment. If one watches oneself on the holovid too many times, does one begin to dissociate oneself from the identity one had previously established? Or is there something else?

YG: Is that a question for Yara?

LQB: No, whether you always speak of yourself in the third person was a question for you.

YG: No.

I believe that's the shortest sentence I've ever heard Yara utter. Master Lanius, how are things here at the Academy? How goes the search for the new faculty member?

YG: Do you plan on fighting the Sith any time soon?

[Lanius looks from one of his interviewers to the other. His eyes betray that he is unsure which question to answer first.]

LQB: Even with a war going on, it's easier to find Jedi to fill roles in the Academy than it is to find Sith. There are, after all, only two of them.

YG: Couldn't that just be a convenient fiction, put forth by the surviving Sith to lessen the likelihood that any single one of them might be

identified as such, or if one were to be identified, then that might leave the mass numbers of Sith who actually roam the galaxy free of attempts to capture or kill them for a decade or two? A lot of us have heard of this "rule of two" - but if the Sith are all liars, why should we believe that they would follow their own rule?

LQB: We have no particular reason to believe them, but we would have less if we'd heard it from their own lips. It makes a certain degree of sense. The dark side is greedy and jealous, and it inspires those who follow it to kill their fellows in order to gain and maintain power. The "rule of two" is a necessity for an order such as theirs to survive. It has been the case throughout recorded history that particularly powerful maleficent forces had trouble working together, and would generally, left to their own devices, kill one another off.

YG: So it could all be a lie?

LQB: Of course.

So, before Yara gets to it, what is your opinion of the situation with Thaere? Many of us heard Minos Fel'Kona speak a few weeks ago on what appeared to be the "official" stance of the Jedi. Would his statements translate directly to Jedi policy?

LQB: There is no policy. There is the Force. [He chuckles.]

YG: Jedi humor. Cute. What about Thaere?

LQB: What about them?

If I may? What about their increasingly violent and disturbing behavior toward the people of Cularin? What about their open flaunting of their protective charter? What about the fact that they are claiming rights and privileges that they should never have had to begin with?

LQB: You're being obtuse. What is it that's bothering you? [He pauses.] You seem to want me to denounce Thaere. I cannot do that. Thaere was appointed protector of Cularin by the Senate, and until such time as the Senate removes Thaere from its position, the Jedi are bound to serve the Senate's will.

YG: So you really are powerless? Um, I mean, you probably aren't powerless, as such, but you aren't going to do anything about the problem?

LQB: What problem? No, don't look so shocked. The evidence has been shoddy at best. Thaere has had reasons and paperwork to back up every questionable thing they've done, and for the things that they haven't done, they've retained plausible deniability. There is nothing to act on, even if there were enough Jedi here to act - - which there aren't.

So if you don't believe Thaere presents any threat to Cularin -

LQB: I don't recall having said that. I've said there is no evidence, and without evidence there can be no "problem."

YG: But you believe them to be a threat?

LQB: I don't recall having said that, either. I don't believe I've made a statement as to whether or not Thaere represents a threat to Cularin.

YG: Do you?

LQB: Do I what?

YG: Intend to make a statement.

LQB: I'm sure I'll make a great many statements in my lifetime. That was one, right there. And that was another. Ms. Grugara, while you seem to have come a long way as a journalist, you do have a tendency to push too hard and listen for the answers that will be most useful, instead of the answers that are actually given.

YG: Huh?

LQB: Why are you a journalist?

I don't believe this interview is supposed to be about Yara.

LQB: Ms. Grugara?

YG: No, that's fine. I want to be a journalist so I can help people. I mean, that's not why I wanted to be a journalist to start with. I wanted to travel and see the galaxy, and I did, and now it kind of seems like I wasn't doing anything important. And we all need to feel like we're important, right?

LQB: Is it not enough to just be who you are?

YG: Um, hello? The rest of the protectors of the galaxy are waving to you from the temple on Coruscant. Jedi are inherently important, because of all the Force doo-dads you can do.

LQB: "Force doo-dads"?

YG: Face it, Lan. You and the Jedi have lots more power than the rest of us, and it's hard to be "normal" in the galaxy. Maybe you never had to try and find something that was special about you because you were always a Jedi, and that's special enough. But some of us have had to work every day to try and find meaning, and...

[Yara's face is bright red. She avoids looking in the direction of the holo-recording equipment.]

Well, that's interesting. Master Lanius, would you care to comment on Count Dooku's role in the Separatist organization?

LQB: No, actually. I'd rather respond to Ms. Grugara, if that's all right with you.

If it's not, you could just wave your hand and make it all right with me.

LQB: But I wouldn't. Because being sensitive to the Force and using the

Force for mundane tasks are very different. There's a widespread perception about Jedi that we are as different from other living creatures as banthas are from droids. That's simply not the case. Every person in the galaxy, every living thing, is part of the living Force. It is an essential part of each of us, and it just happens that Jedi, and a few others, are able to feel the Force and to use - and be used by - it. Jedi also search for meaning, just as Ms. Grugara has described from her own experiences. Being a Jedi is not an end-state. I know Jedi who, when they were young, wanted nothing so much as to be Jedi Knights. They made it, then found that they still had to find things to strive for. If you achieve a goal - whether it's being a Jedi or being a journalist - and then do nothing after, you are wasting your life. Jedi are not static. We do not sit around, once we create our lightsabers and don our robes, to wait for the galaxy to treat us with respect. We also seek out meaning, and while our search may be different than Ms. Grugara's - we seek to understand the will of the Force, while she seeks to help people - there is also not nearly so much difference as we might initially suspect. Because the will of the Force may be that Ms. Grugara helps people.

I can't say that I blame her for her frustration. The Jedi have always seemed remote and aloof to the populace. There were few enough of us before the war broke out that when one or two of us appeared on a planet, we were newsworthy. But we remain who we are. Each of us - Jedi and non-Jedi - can only be one person, and part of being that person is the search for our unique identity. So if you find yourself through the act of communicating and helping others, I would say that at worst you are no worse off than any Jedi I have ever met, and you are likely better off than a sizeable number of us.

That was quite a speech, Master Lanius. Is it wise, do you think, to admit to frailty in this time of crisis?

LQB: It's not frailty. We would shatter much more easily if we believed ourselves invincible, and, if we presented ourselves as invincible, it would galvanize our enemies all the more when a Jedi fell.

Yara, you look like you have something to say.

YG: Lan, are you allowed to date?

LQB: Excuse me?

And on that note, I believe we should end our conversation. I'd like to thank Master Lanius and Yara Grugara for being with us. Until next time...